

"Reading, Talking and Thinking About Mental Well-Being"

"Well Aware in the classroom: Minding Nana"

Linda Millar, Teacher's Resource Author, Well Aware Series: To give you a true sense of what Well Aware is all about, we're inviting you to join us with some Grade 6 students.

Image of text: For this portion of the video, we have selected a text entitled "Minding Nana" written by Tanya Lloyd Kyi. The text "Minding Nana" by Tanya Lloyd Kyi is written in the form of a memoir and takes us through the joy and heartbreak of living with and losing a valued family member, Tanya's nana, who suffers from dementia. Tanya struggles with thoughts, memories, and choices as she learns a lot about herself and her priorities during this difficult experience. In order to see how the invitations to learning or what you may know as lesson plans are laid out, let's take a few moments to take a closer look.

Image of invitation: What you're seeing is the format used in all of the Invitations to Learning. The Purpose of the Invitation and the Content Focus sum up the learning experience at a glance. In the margin a suggested reading level is indicated, which of course is just a guide. Also listed are the text type and genre so that you can see how the text fits into your literacy program. Every Invitation includes reproducible line masters found on the Well Aware website. Some of the Invitations involve sensitive issues. In the case of "Minding Nana" we're talking about dementia. A Teacher Tip provides you with quick suggestions that will help you to address the text comfortably in your classroom. The What You Need to Know section ties in the content foci by providing background information about the text and the health issue explored, as well as specific information on each of the intended teaching points. In the case of "Minding Nana," the Invitation talks about managing emotions, coping with loss, and has a literacy component about the text feature of chapter titles. The "Minding Nana" Invitation has curriculum connections to Language, the Arts, Health and Physical Education, and Character Education. The teaching notes relate to what we call the Six Cs: Centering, Contemplating, Connecting, Confirming, Creating, and Celebrating. For more on this structure, please see video number 3 that describes the components of the Well Aware series.

Section D After Reading: Reflecting About the Text is where you will find student-centered activities organized according to the content foci from the first page. As you can see, there are a variety of activities, so you can select the ones that you feel will resonate with your students.

For the in-class session you're about to view, the students have already read the text "Minding Nana." We've chosen to demonstrate the activity under the Managing Emotions section called "I Feel...".

Linda Millar interacting with students: And yesterday we had the opportunity to read the text "Minding Nana." If I had to ask you for one word that would describe what you thought of and what emotion you felt when you read "Minding Nana," what would it be? Yes?

Student: Sad.

Linda: Sadness. Anybody else?

Student: Sadness and a little bit of, like, acceptance.

Linda: Acceptance, very good. Thank you.

Student: Upset and maybe frustrated.

Linda: Upset, frustrated.

Student: Guilt.

Linda: Guilt, good.

Student: That was mine.

Linda: That was yours, good, guilt.

Student: A little bit of happiness in there.

Linda: A little bit of happiness in there.

Student: Disappointment.

Linda: Disappointment, wow. I mean you really came out with a lot -- a lot of ideas for that, and I think that that's really, really helpful. And sometimes it's easy for us to describe how we feel. For example, if I said to you, how would you feel if you had something that you really loved stolen from you? What emotion or what feeling would you have if that happened?

Student: Anger, probably.

Linda: Anger.

Student: Like, really sad.

Linda: Sad.

Student: Confusion.

Linda: Confusion. Why would somebody take that from you? Right. What about if you just aced a test? You came in and you had to write a math test, and you went home and you just aced that test. How would you feel? Yes?

Student: Excited to show my mom.

Linda: Okay, good.

Student: Happy.

Linda: Happy.

Student: Excited.

Linda: Excited. Over here?

Student: Proud.

Linda: Proud. How about this one? How about if you tried out for a team, and you didn't make it? Yes?

Student: I'd be upset.

Linda: Upset.

Student: I guess I'd be fine because I know I can try next year or get better at it.

Linda: Wow, love that. Yes?

Student: A little bit jealous for the people that did make it on the team.

Linda: Ah, a little bit of jealousy. There's an honest answer, yes.

So I'd like you in your group is to take a couple of minutes and think about how Tanya feels about being given the job of giving Nana her pills. Now yesterday you did some work on emotion words. Do you have those pages? [inaudible] in front of you. Oh here they are here, okay. So they're here. I'm going to ask one person from each group to come up and get your group ones. And what we did yesterday is we brainstormed different words we can use to help us explain exactly how we're feeling. Rather than just saying I'm sad, what are some other words that you might be able to use? So that's what we were doing. So if you could come up and get these and then spend a few minutes trying to think of words that would describe how Tanya feels in this situation.

Linda speaks to a group of students: And so do you think it really should be her responsibility?

Student 1: Yeah. I guess. It is her nana. And --

Student 2: She's doing everything she can to take care of her. And, like, her grandma's probably, like, I don't know, 80, 90, I don't know. But she's doing everything she can because she probably knows that her grandma's, like, suffering, and she's going to, like, pass away soon. So, like, I wouldn't say she's feeling, like, being used, but I think she's doing it for a good reason. And, like, just helping out around the house because my parents ask me to do a lot of things. And I'm, like, yeah, no thanks. But I end up doing them anyways, I feel really proud after I do it, and I make my parents feel happy. So I think that's -- I think that's how she's feeling.

Linda back at front of entire class: Thanks again for your hard work and the discussions were great. You know, I really feel that you are really putting a lot of effort into this, and I congratulate you on that. You know, these are the kinds of things that we need to celebrate as we work in a classroom, when we are really thinking hard, when we are trying to put two and two together and make the connections in our learning. It's really important for us to understand that.

So what I'd like to do is to go from one group to another and see what kinds of emotion words you were able to put on how Tanya was feeling being given that responsibility to give nana her medication. And let's start with this group right here. Do you want to stand up, please? Thank you.

Student: She may feel nervous that she's going to give her nana the wrong pills or, like, too much or not enough. And she may feel annoyed because she wants to go to school with her friends, not be, like, with her nana all the time. Or she might feel dependable or depended on, like she's depended on too much. Or, like, she has too much responsibility. Or she just has to keep walking there and back and there and back. Or rushed because she's, like, she hasn't even finished blow drying her hair and, like, picked out her earrings, and she has to go run and give her nana her pills.

Linda: Excellent, thank you so much. Over here, please.

Student: We had "needed" because she's needed to give the pills to her grandma. "Worried" because if she doesn't do it right or she messes up. "Sad" because she has to give her grandma the pills. And "relieved" when, like, the nurses get there or that you know she's gotten the right pills taken. And "annoyed" a little bit because her grandma's not calling her what she would like.

Linda: Excellent, thank you so much. And this group.

Student: We thought that she'd feel stressed because she has to deal with school too and her nana. And we also thought that she'd feel happy because she's taking care of her nana.

Linda: Great, good. Well, thank you very much. You know, I love the fact that you were using these sheets that we worked on yesterday to expand the vocabulary of words that we can use to express how we feel. And it's really important that we do that for two reasons. One, that you can actually put a name on how you're feeling, rather than just "I'm okay." You can actually say, actually, I'm feeling really good today. Or I'm excited. Or I'm not feeling great today. I'm kind of worried about this. And it's really important for us to do that. And secondly, as an adult, it's important for us to get a true sense of how you are feeling. And as we know from this story, sometimes it's a real challenge to manage our life and to cope with all the things that are going on.

Lindsey Bowen, Teacher, W.I. Dick Middle School: That was the one thing I really noticed was that all the topics were something that they could relate to, so everybody had a chance to participate at some level. And it

wasn't threatening because they could make a connection with the topics, whether it's something that they've experienced or they have a friend that's experienced or their parents. So they all had something to say, and their engagement level was extremely high.

Linda Millar: Once we can get the students talking, they're able to feel empathy for others. If we can help them to make the connections to their own lives, we'll continue to help them, not only identify their emotions, but learn how to cope with them as well.

Text on screen: Well Aware can be used in many different ways. The teacher in this video chose to use one title for all students, who worked in small groups. You may wish to use different approaches based on the needs of your class.

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